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the religious object and its symbolic expression, we may be allowed to view the question of "essence" in a form incongruous with that which governs Dr. Case's antithesis of static and developmental. But this concerns the philosopher rather than the historian.

FRANCIS A. CHRISTIE.

BOOKS OF MEDIEVAL AND MODERN HISTORY

Customary Acres and their Historical Importance. Being a series of unfinished Essays by the late FREDERIC SEEBOHM, Hon.LL.D., Litt.D. (London and New York: Longmans, Green, and Company. 1914. Pp. xiii, 274.)

DURING his last illness, Mr. Seebohm devoted himself to grouping as coherently as possible the notes made in connection with his latest researches and the result has, with cautious apology, been published by his son. Although both writer and editor were well aware of the incompleteness of the work, they rightly surmised that it would be of value to scholars—at least a contributory "essay", as Mr. Seebohm modestly liked to consider all his books.

One readily sees how he came to give attention to customary acres. Being primarily interested in the economic history of the pastoral and agricultural community, he began more than thirty years ago to inquire what light could be thrown upon its development by a study of its so-called "shell". This shell was the expanse of open field round the settlement. To explain its character he wrote what is still perhaps his best-known chapter, the one which describes the three-field system as it was practised in 1819 in his native village of Hitchin. Resorting thereafter to this type of agrarian organization as a standard for comparison, he investigated earlier and more remote usages, until, by inferring a long-continued and intimate connection between field systems and the fortunes of the community which employed them, he became the champion of the early origin of manorial lordship. After establishing, as it seemed to him, the conclusion that the open-field system in one form or another acted for centuries as a preservative shell for a tribal or village community, he next inquired whether additional arguments could not be derived from a study of the units into which a villager's holding was divided, the customary acres scattered throughout the arable fields. The book before us is the result.

As a matter of fact, the author's investigations have brought to light nothing new about the development of manorial lordship. On the contrary they have taken him afield from that topic and, as they stand, relate rather to another subject upon which he has often dwelt before. This is the character and extent of early Celtic economic usages. For the somewhat slender connecting thread of these chapters is the influence exerted by Celtic rent-paying units of tenure, and the extent to which Celtic units of linear and superficial measure can be traced throughout western Europe.

Of these two themes the latter receives more consideration. Starting with the old British mile, which is identified with the Gallic *leuga*, the author discovers that one-tenth of it constituted the length of the British customary acre. In shape this acre was ten times as long as broad, as is the entirely distinct English statute acre. With the customary acre is next identified the Armorican acre or arpent used across the Channel; both had the same superficial content, but in shape the latter was only five times as long as broad. To make the necessary adjustment, the length of the Armorican acre was so reduced that it became one-tenth of the half-diagonal of the square *leuga*. This relationship between the lengths of superficial units, whose content was the same but whose shapes were respectively one by ten and two by five, the author finds recurring in other regions of Europe and to it he often reverts in his explanations.

Having argued that, despite its double manifestation, there was a typical British-Armorican acre, Mr. Seeböhm makes a pilgrimage throughout Europe to discover traces of it elsewhere. In the course of this journey we are introduced to much recondite learning. For the author examines the shape and dimensions of European acres from the Baltic to Spain and from the Black Sea to Cornwall. This dictionary of customary acres constitutes perhaps the most valuable and enduring part of the book. The generalizations, however, which become possible at the end of our progress are somewhat vague. The British-Armorican customary acre has appeared only sporadically—in Bavaria, near Venice, on the plains north of the Black Sea. Elsewhere one finds another acre, its length based upon the subdivision of a different unit of itinerary measure, the parasang. Upon these observations the author builds the hypothesis that the British-Armorican acre was the creation of the Celtic people, who, as they moved westward across Europe, left traces of their passage in the survival of this acre. In their last home on the western coast it was naturally most persistent.

The trend of such a thesis is to emphasize the importance of Celtic custom in European economic life. In keeping with this attitude are the opening chapters of the book, which have little enough concern with customary acres. They are rather a study of the areas occupied by tribute-paying groups in Ireland and Wales, the unit area being that adapted to a plough team of eight oxen and a herd of twenty-five cows. What interests the author here is the possibility that the English hide may have been derived from some such unit as this and may illustrate in its history the transition from a pastoral state of society to one of more intensive tillage. For would it not be natural that, with the growing preponderance of agriculture, the Celtic unit should shrink to the English one, and the herd of twenty-five cows dwindle to four, while the plough team remained unchanged?

It may be that we are left unconvinced by certain of the author's arguments. One feels, at times, that there is some clever sleight of

hand about the interpretation of linear and superficial measures, that, for example, the identity of the British and Armorican acres is not so complete as to unite them in contrast with most of the other acres of Europe. But the book is a stimulating one; and the differentiation between various customary acres, especially such broad distinctions as that between long acres, resultant from ploughing with the heavy plough, and square ones, resultant from cross ploughing, are of great importance. The presence of long acres, near Venice, for example, in the midst of a region characterized by Roman cross-ploughing, is significant. In its scope and erudition, the work is a fitting epilogue to the writings of a scholar who will always be remembered as the first to give due attention to the significance of Celtic custom in the early life of Europe.

H. L. GRAY.

A History of England and Greater Britain. By ARTHUR LYON CROSS. (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1914. Pp. xiii, 1165.)

THIS is a text-book of more than usual importance. In the first place, it is intended specifically for college use, and there are very few college text-books of English history. Secondly, it is a scholarly work, of much thoroughness, detail, and critical judgment. Thirdly, it brings the narrative more closely down to date than any other text-book now in print. It is in the main a political history, describing the development of political and, as might be anticipated from the special knowledge and interests of Professor Cross, legal history, with such attention to ecclesiastical and economic matters as is necessary to make clear the sequence and significance of political events. On the other hand a much broader treatment of history has been introduced by means of seven or eight general chapters scattered through the book, each describing as a whole the period of which the consecutive events have just been detailed. In these excellent general chapters trade and industry, social customs, art and architecture, science, learning, and literature are treated with much fullness and interest.

We confess to finding these chapters much more interesting than those which go between and make up so much the larger part of the book, and believe that they are not only more interesting but more valuable to the student. Is it possible for anybody to remember, or indeed understand, so many detailed political changes as are described in the narrative chapters of this book? Fifty-two persons are introduced by name during the thirteen years of the reign of George I., seven statutes are either explained or alluded to, and nineteen treaties, changes of ministry, or political negotiations are described. This period is chosen simply at a venture. Professor Cross does his work of detailed narrative with great skill and mastery of the subject. But is it practicable to teach students so many things and is it desirable to make the effort?